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The Critique of Political Economy and the 'New Dialectic': Marx, Hegel and the Problem of Christopher J. Arthur's 'Homology Thesis'

Elena Louisa Lange

Abstract: In recent years, Christopher J. Arthur's 'New Dialectic' has had a strong impact on Marx scholarship in the Anglophone world by highlighting the correlation of Hegel's systematic (non-historical) dialectic with Marx's central oeuvre, *Capital*, and especially Marx's theory of the value form. He claims that the categories of Hegel's *Logic* and those of the beginning of Marx's *Capital* show a 'striking homology... given some minor reconstructive work.' (Arthur 2004, p. 4).

This essay criticises Arthur's reading of Marx and especially Hegel against the background of important contributions to Hegel scholarship in the last decades. This scholarship has been groundbreaking in the theory of dialectic and category-theory, in the systematisation of the antinomical structure of the concept and the problem of the semantic-pragmatic presupposition (*semantisch-pragmatischer Präsuppositions-begriff*) of the scientific exposition. Notwithstanding its foundational character for a scholarly treatment and understanding of Hegel's dialectic, these approaches are missing from Arthur's intervention.

This, as will be shown, has grave consequences for 1) Arthur's reading of Hegel's *Logic*, 2) Arthur's application of Hegel's dialectic to Marx's presentation of the value form and 3) Arthur's 'sublation' of Marx in Hegel.

It will be argued that Arthur's misrecognition of Hegel's dialectical method also negatively affects Arthur's understanding of the scope and intent of Marx's critical project, especially the necessary inner relation between abstract labour, value and money at the beginning of *Capital* vol. 1.

Keywords: Marx, value form theory, Hegelian dialectic, critique of fetishism, antinomical structure, Dieter Wandschneider, Michael Theunissen

1. Introduction

It is the view of the author of the present essay that a sound critique in the philological-hermeneutical sciences can only be justified on the basis that the texts in question have to be measured against their own claims. This is especially important when these claims are low, but requires no less of attention if these claims are high.² To say that the basic categories of Marx's *Capital* as they are unfolded in the first five chapters

¹ I would like to thank Riccardo Bellofiore and Raji C. Steineck for their helpful comments. Special thanks to Frederick Young for being a diligent English proof reader.

² To say a philosophical text's claim is 'low' is not to denounce it. The high/low-distinction merely serves as a rough heuristic to differentiate philosophical texts which argue, criticise, or analyse particular author's or authors' theorems (a 'low' claim) from texts of the much rarer sort that claim to 'identify' two major and arguably different philosophical systems and their categories (a 'high' claim), like the one under discussion.

of volume 1 are ‘homologous’ to or have to be ‘identified’ with those of both volumes of Hegel’s *Science of Logic* is certainly a claim of the latter kind. Even more so is the claim that Marx’s *Capital* in its basic structure follows the same method as the whole textual corpus of Hegel’s *Logic*. It therefore remains to be analysed how and in what way these claims are persuasive by always keeping in mind the ‘high’ or, rather, universal character of this claim: the general applicability of the main work of one of the philosophical tradition’s greatest thinkers to Marx’s *Capital*, probably the most rigorous and detailed account, but most importantly, *critique* of bourgeois capitalist society that we still have today. In other words, it must be shown if the ‘New’ or ‘Systematic’ Dialectic approach that makes this claim, exemplified in the works of Christopher J. Arthur, persuasively lives up to the homology thesis it makes ³: ‘What we can see ... is a striking homology between the structure of Hegel’s *Logic* and Marx’s *Capital*, or, at least, a homology given some minor reconstructive work on either or both.’⁴

As one would expect, in this methodological-theoretical approach, a profound knowledge of both Marx’s as well as Hegel’s central oeuvre and their more recent trajectories and evaluations can be presupposed. What is both surprising and characteristic, however, is that in the ‘New Dialectic’-approach that Arthur designates as his own⁵, the understanding of Hegel’s method is strikingly perfunctory. This is reflected in both in a superficial, sometimes even banalising reading of

3 Apart from Arthur, there is a similar claim in the Anglophone Uno School who emphasise the parallels between Hegel’s *Logic* and ‘the dialectic of capital’ in the so-called ‘homomorphism’-thesis, exemplified in the work of Thomas T. Sekine. See e.g. ‘The Dialectic of Capital: An Unoist Interpretation’ *Science and Society* vol. 62, no. 3 Fall 1998), p. 445. However, for reasons of space, the present essay will not review Sekine’s and other Anglophone Uno School’s (e.g. Robert Albritton’s) claim separately, even if my criticism could be extended to their approach at some instances. For a closer investigation on the Anglophone Uno School’s method, see Ch. 4 of my forthcoming volume *Value without Fetish: Uno’s K z ’s Theory of Pure Capitalism in Light of The Marxian Critique of Political Economy* (Historical Materialism Book Series/Brill).

4 Arthur 2004, p. 7.

5 As for a discussion of the term or label the ‘New Dialectic’, see the ‘Introduction: The New Turn to Dialectic’, in Arthur 2004, pp. 1- 16. ‘The term “the New Dialectic” in the title was originally coined by me in a review, and it has since been widely used in the sense I intended, namely to refer to literature sharing certain common themes, but which does not take the form of a definite ‘school’. Rather it is a convenient way of grouping together thinkers of independent spirit, clearly doing something rather distinctive in the present intellectual conjuncture. It has already been made the occasion of robust criticism from John Rosenthal, who labelled it ‘new Hegelian Marxism’. As we shall see, many of the most active researchers believe they are working within a new paradigm they call ‘Systematic Dialectic’, but the tendency I label ‘new’ is more comprehensive and includes those who still think Hegel’s philosophy of history has something to offer (e.g. Joe McCarney).’ Arthur 2004, p. 1.

Hegel’s text as well as a non-acknowledgement of research that has made outstanding contributions to the difficult topic of Hegel’s method in the last decades. This unawareness of past and more recent international research in Hegel studies also affects the main gist of the homology-thesis which, as will be shown, renders the categorial applicability of ‘Hegel to Marx’ meaningless or evades the actual performance of such an application.⁶

Characteristic of Arthur’s ‘New Dialectic’ approach is the ignorance of the international, but predominantly German Hegel reception of the last 40 years⁷ that has made groundbreaking contributions to a theory of dialectic and to category-theory, to a systematisation of the antinomical structure of the concept and to the problem of the semantic-pragmatic presupposition (*semantisch-pragmatischer Präsuppositionsbegriff*) of the scientific exposition, as discussed in Hegel’s programmatic introduction to the *Logic*, ‘With what must the beginning of science be made?’ (*‘Womit muss der Anfang der Wissenschaften gemacht werden?’*) and in the Section on ‘Quality’ in the first part of Volume One of the *Logic*, the Doctrine of Being.⁸ Especially the approaches by Michael Theunissen (1980), Thomas Kesselring (1981), and Dieter Wandschneider (1995) argue from an informed background both in classical epistemological, metaphysical, as well as in logical-mathematical philosophical discourse to which references are astonishingly missing from Arthur’s ‘New Dialectic’, and which thereby also misses to situate Hegel in his own scientific context.⁹

6 I agree here with Jacques Bidet’s verdict of the New Dialectic (Arthur) and the (Anglophone) Uno School: ‘... not only do these two interpretations of *Capital* “in the light of Hegel’s *Logic*” lack any rigorous connection, but the correspondences they respectively assume are strictly incompatible.’ Bidet 2005, 123. I differ however from Bidet’s evaluation with regard to the particular way in which Hegel’s method influenced Marx’s exposition in *Capital*.

7 Important contributions to a theory of dialectic have been made by Dieter Wandschneider (1995), Thomas Kesselring (1984), and Michael Theunissen (1980). The most eminent German Hegel scholar, Dieter Henrich, has also widely contributed to the problem of the negation at the beginning of the *Logic*, as have Klaus Hartmann (Arthur mentions him once), Otto Pöggeler and Hans Friedrich Fulda. Vittorio Hösle has published an influential and original approach to ‘Hegel’s System’ in two volumes. The latter figures, notwithstanding their importance for a philosophical understanding of Hegel’s method, cannot be considered here. A survey of the German literature on Hegel’s method in the *Logic* is provided in the bibliography, though it is by no means exhaustive.

8 I will use here and throughout the text my own translation of the *Logic*, the *Encyclopedia*, and, where necessary, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, except where otherwise indicated, referring to the Suhrkamp edition of Hegel’s *Werke*, see Hegel 1986.

9 Large parts of the *Logic* were written in direct reference to Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, especially the ‘Transcendental Dialectic’ that Hegel discusses extensively in the second chapter of the Doctrine of Being, ‘Quantity’. References to Reinhold, Fichte, Schelling and other lesser known figures of early German Idealism are constantly referred to throughout this work and Hegel derives important insights from his direct predecessors and contemporaries (e.g., Hegel’s discussion of the ‘I’ to form the ‘beginning of the sciences’ is a direct rejection of Fichte’s intellectual intuition (intellektuelle Anschauung)). Notwithstanding the fact that the architecture of the *Logic* is in wide parts directly informed by these debates, this unfortunately does not seem to concern

Indeed, as we will see in a brief sketch of Wandschneider's, Kesselring's and Theunissen's respective contributions that Hegel's method is indeed more complex than Arthur suggests. In this essay therefore, I will undertake an evaluation of mainly Arthur's work *The New Dialectic and Marx's Capital* which addresses its crucial shortcomings not only with regard to Hegel's method in the *Logic*, but also with regard to his understanding of the critical implications of Marx's *Capital*.

Arthur's approach presents us with a veritably ambitious project to demonstrate the conceptual, objective, and methodological correspondences in the conceptual dialectic between Marx's *Capital*, and within it, especially the exposition of the value form, and Hegel's *Science of Logic*. Arthur even believes that the presentation of the value form in *Capital* vol. 1 and Hegel's *Logic* 'are to be identified; we are not simply applying Hegel's logic to an independent content'¹⁰ and goes so far as to claim that the 'forms' of value 'are in effect of such abstract purity as to constitute a real incarnation of the ideas of Hegel's logic.'¹¹ However, just as the presentation is veritably ambitious, it comes with (at least) three veritable problems, which will be hitherto addressed and then specified in each single case. For systematicity, the first problem concerns Arthur's reading of Marx, the second concerns his reading of Hegel, and – dialectically – the third concerns the *sublation of Marx in Hegel* that Arthur in my view undertakes with his research programme. However, the reader should be informed from the outset that no such thing is intended as a standard defense of Marx's 'materialist' standpoint versus Hegel's 'petty idealism' ; nor do I intend to play the card of the offended Hegelian who sees his elevated conceptual purity in danger because of the application of an 'impure' (economy-critical) content. I aim to deliver a defense of Marx's value theory in my understanding of what can be named 'Marx's own terms', and a reading of Hegel that is *also* informed by the German reception, especially with regard to theories of dialectic that have evolved around the scholars mentioned above, and which Arthur unfortunately does not take notice of.

The three problems in Arthur's research programme are, needless to say, closely entwined, but the exposition of each of them will help to analyse the scope of how deeply they penetrate each other.

The first problem concerns Arthur's critique of the methodological setting of abstract labour (or „labour“ in Arthur's diction – he often

Arthur's New Dialectic-approach. I can only briefly point at this gap, yet for systematic reasons (and, obviously, reasons of space) cannot fill it within this essay.

10 Arthur 2004, p. 82.

11 Arthur 2004, p. 82.

omits this important qualifier) as value substance, and of the labour theory of value at the beginning of *Capital*.¹² It will be argued *that Arthur's methodological reconstruction of Capital's architecture, dismissing the labour theory of value as premature within the presentational architecture or as altogether wrong*¹³, *leads to a misrepresentation of both the expositional intent of Capital's beginning, as well as the critical project of Capital as a critique of the fetish-characteristic forms that value takes*, and its presentation in classical political economy as a whole. The second problem in Arthur's interpretation, as will be shown, concerns his method of adopting specific terms of Hegel's *Logic of Being* (1812), *Logic of Essence* (1813) and *Logic of the Concept* (1816) to specific theorems in the first five chapters (but not all of them, as will be shown) in *Capital*. The third problem concerns the possibility of a real application of Marx to Hegel, especially a) the question of a counterpart to the conceptual status of Marx's fetish paradigm in Hegel's *Logic*, and the equally important question if b) Marx's *critical* impetus has a complement that can be determined in Hegel's oeuvre.

2. „Leaving aside...any labour content“ - Arthur's critique of abstract labour as value substance and the labour theory of value in Chapter 1 of Capital

Arthur's claim that 'labour' as value substance is prematurely introduced and not proved in the methodological exposition of the beginning of *Capital* is one of the central paradigms of his reinterpretation:

'... I differ here from Marx in that I refuse to find it necessary to come to labour until after conceptualising capital as a form-determination. Bringing in labour too early risks giving the appearance of model-building and committing the exposition to a stage of simple commodity production.'¹⁴

As I will show however, this claim is difficult to defend precisely from a Hegelian standpoint – a standpoint that Marx, as I will argue, adopts. Let us first give an overview of Hegel's exposition and choice of

12 Here, in the first pages of the first chapter, 'The Commodity', the first definition of the labour theory of value is to be found: 'A use-value, or useful article, therefore, has value only because abstract human labour is objectified [vergegenständlicht] or materialized in it. How, then, is the magnitude of this value to be measured? By means of the quantity of the 'value-forming substance', the labour, contained in the article. This quantity is measured by its duration, and the labour-time is itself measured on the particular scale of hours, days etc.' Marx 1976, p. 129.

13 See Arthur 2004, p. 155: 'The two major schools that claim to be able peremptorily to reduce "value" to a definite content are those adhering to the labour theory of value and to the marginal utility theory.'

14 Arthur 2004, p. 85. This passage will be discussed in more detail below.

thematic structure at the beginning of the *Logic*, an issue we will return to in the later discussion. Hegel has made clear in the introduction to his *Science of Logic* (1812), in which he emphatically discusses the methodological structure and categorial exposition, that there can be no such thing as an ‘unmediated’ beginning.¹⁵ The (im)possibility of a ‘pure beginning’ in the metaphysical science of logic therefore becomes the first theme of Hegel’s exposition. This choice of thematic informs the dialectic (in the precise sense) of the relation between *immediacy* (Unvermitteltheit) and *mediation* (Vermittlung, Vermitteltheit), to become reflected in the first categories of the *Logic*, ‘Being’ and ‘Nothingness’. In other words, for the beginning to be a *real* beginning (ein „wahrer Anfang“), the *dialectic of immediacy and mediation* (or „mediated-ness“, „Vermitteltheit“) of the beginning itself becomes thematic as the first dialectical relation. We will come back to this point in more detail. What we can say for now is that with regard to the supposed ‘pure’ and immediate/unmediated beginning of the exposition, Hegel criticises previous methodological attempts that thematise a ‘known’ fact as the immediate, and simultaneously distances himself from hypothesising such an ‘immediacy’ as the beginning.¹⁶ He goes on to argue that the attempt to think the notion of immediacy is necessarily bound to be the result of mediation:

‘Here the beginning is made with being which is represented as having come to be through mediation, a mediation which is also a sublating of itself; and there is presupposed pure knowing as the outcome of finite knowing, of consciousness. But if no presupposition is to be made and the beginning itself is taken immediately, then its only determination is that it is to be the beginning of logic, of thought as such. All that is present is simply the resolve, which can also be regarded as *arbitrary*, that we propose to consider thought as such.’¹⁷

Note that for Hegel, the choice of category for the beginning has an ‘arbitrary’ character: the category of Being cannot by and out of itself deliver its own justification as to *why* it makes the beginning. After all, it *should* be a pure, presupposition-less concept, but this will show to be a fallacy. And yet, this has to be seen in hindsight. For now, we have to make do with dissatisfactory determinations. At the level of method, however, this constellation is rich in information: the dialectical method

15 It is evident from this alone that Hegel’s *Logic* has a ‘critical function’ (Theunissen), but not in the sense that Arthur thinks. For some preliminary remarks on the *Logic*’s critical funtion, see the end of this essay.

16 Hegel 1986b, p. 74-5.

17 Hegel 1986b, p. 68. Emphasis EL.

shows *how* and to what extent the *semantic* as well as *pragmatic* cleft is always presupposed in the categories: it shows how the concept of ‘being’ could never *mean* (with regard to its semantic content) what it designates (with regard to the pragmatic object addressed) – though for more clarity, we will return to this point in greater detail. From this generally however follows a specific preference for the categories of Being and Nothingness to make up the beginning of the dialectical movement: in their supposed ‘pure’ immediacy, they show themselves to be mediated, for they are *unthinkable as such* (*immediate*) ‘determinations’. In fact, for Hegel it is fundamental to think determinations of immediacy as a contradiction in terms: if categories are determinable, they have ceased to be ‘immediate’ or ‘pure’, and if they are ‘immediate’ or ‘pure’, we will not be able to think (determine) them. Here is also the reason why the ‘purest’ categories are already categories of reflection: ‘Simple immediacy is itself an expression of reflection and contains a reference to its distinction from what is mediated. This simple immediacy, therefore, in its true expression is pure being.’¹⁸ But from the realisation of this ‘falseness’ of immediacy, the dialectical movement can begin in its precise sense: Being and Nothingness hence cannot remain in their pure state and fall into Becoming, the ‘immediate synthesis of Being and Nothingness’¹⁹ as the next category. How this ‘impossibility’ of Being and Nothingness must be comprehended will be shown in the later discussion, referring to Kesselring and Wandschneider.

At the same time, the whole movement of thought as presented in the *Logic* is bound to culminate in the Idea, resp. the Concept in which ‘uncomprehended’ reality is finally *comprehended* (*begriffen*). In the Idea, the imperfect thought-forms rise to their own reasonability in their truth, moving beyond intelligence (*Verstand*) and reflection (which is always polemically used against Kant’s system). Here is the dialectical nexus between the concept of Being, ‘such a poor and restricted determination’²⁰, and the richest determination of the Idea, while the Idea itself ‘divests’ (*entäußert*) itself back into immediacy:

‘Only the Concept is what is true, and, more precisely, it is the truth of Being and of Essence. So each of these, if they are clung to in their isolation, or by themselves, must be considered at the

18 Hegel 1986b, p. 68.

19 Hegel 1986b, p. 100.

20 Hegel 2010, p. 699.

same time as untrue – Being because it is still only what is immediate, and Essence because it is still only what is mediated. At this point, we could at once raise the question why, if that is the case, we should begin with what is untrue and why we do not straightaway begin with what is true. The answer is that the truth must, precisely as such, validate itself and here, within logical thinking itself, validation consists in the Concept's showing itself to be what is mediated through and with itself, so that it shows itself to be at the same time the genuinely immediate.²¹

In other words, Hegel shows at the end of his *Logic*, that the Idea, the comprehended and perfectly mediated Truth at the end of the process is to be relegated to pure immediacy of Being of the *Logic*'s beginning: 'This result (Truth or The Idea) has given itself again the form of immediacy as the whole which has returned to itself in its self-sameness. Therefore it is of the same kind as the beginning (das Anfangende) has determined itself.'²² Consequently, as already indicated, Hegel makes clear from the outset that pure being is already mediated *from the standpoint of the whole* from which only it can be *thought*.²³ To think pure being as unmediated, is likewise itself an abstraction (or 'onesidedness', *Einseitigkeit*) from the process of mediation pure being has already gone through from the standpoint of the whole.²⁴ Needless to say, Hegel's system forms a *circle* as the perfect scientific method, in which Objectivity (*Inhalt*) and Form or Subjectivity are to be identified. I will come back to the point of the 'circle' of scientific thought in a while.

These short reflections should only mark the setting for a better understanding of Arthur's position in which the above connection is not addressed, and shall be elaborated on in more detail in the next section. The issue at stake is that with regard to the necessary structural and

21 Hegel 1991, p. 134.

22 Hegel 1986c, p. 566.

23 Nicole Pepperell in her close reading of Hegel's method in light of Marx's critique has pointed to the same dialectic between the methodologically necessary presuppositions and the standpoint of the whole by which the presupposition is 'sublated': '... a philosophical system is scientific, for Hegel, to the extent that it can justify its own point of departure by showing how the relations between the various elements of this system could have been revealed only from that particular starting point, and thus that the starting point is reflexively implied by the entire network of relations. In this way, the starting point that initially looks arbitrary and dogmatic is demonstrated to have been immanently necessary all along, even if the basis for this necessity becomes explicit only once the system as a whole is known.' Pepperell 2010, p. 137.

24 Hegel 1986b, p. 72: 'Pure being is the unity to which pure knowledge (reines Wissen) returns, or, if it still has to be differentiated as form from its own unity, it is also its content. This is the side on which this *pure being*, as the absolute-immediate, is likewise the absolutely mediated. But it will have to be essentially taken only in this one-sidedness to be the pure-immediate (das Rein-Unmittelbare), precisely because it is as the beginning.'

methodological presupposition of the determination of abstract labour as the substance of value, Marx followed the same method as Hegel. Marx, like every critical thinker after Hegel, was well aware that there is no such thing as 'presupposition-less thought' (voraussetzungsloses Denken). Like Hegel, Marx knew that the starting point of the exposition must always-already be mediated by heavily burdened conceptual presuppositions. The point for him was *not to deny* that the pivotal concepts come with pragmatic and semantic baggage, but on the contrary to show that the idea of a *pure exposition* necessarily falls into ideological abyss.²⁵ I will demonstrate how Arthur gets seduced by the allure of conceptual-theoretical 'purity' and its vicissitudes by demonstrating that the beginning of *his own presentation* of the application of Hegel's categories to value form analysis indeed abounds with presuppositions – quite contrary to its alleged purity, and, consequently, contrary to Arthur's own methodological claims.

I contend that Marx presented the very first determinations, the commodity and its value, in such a way that its essential content – abstract labour and the determination of value as the socially necessary labour time needed to produce a commodity in the social average – would impress itself as the compelling heuristic tool or *the analytical basis* not only for the first three chapters or the middle part of Vol. 1, but the complete analysis of the economic laws of movement of modern society that *Capital* is comprised of. The labour theory of value is therefore the *key heuristic tool* to unravel the fetishised forms in which value presents itself through its own movement. In its forms of appearance, an increasing obfuscation takes place in the economic categories that appear on the surface: whereas the commodity, money, and capital still show remnants of their origin in abstract labour – no matter how faintly²⁶ – , the relation is increasingly obscured by the time the analysis reaches the concept of profit and commercial capital, and finally completed in the economic concept of interest-bearing capital where 'the capital

25 To this methodological 'dialectic' Marx pointed also in the 'Results of the Immediate Process of Production': 'As the elementary form of bourgeois wealth, the commodity was our point of departure, the prerequisite for the emergence of capital. On the other hand, commodities appear now as the product of capital. ... if we consider societies where capitalist production is highly developed, we find that the commodity is both the constant elementary premiss (precondition) of capital and also the immediate result of the capitalist process of production.' Marx bases this argument on the *historical* emergence of capitalism. Marx 1976, p. 949.

26 See also this passage from the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*: 'It is only through the habit of everyday life that we come to think of it perfectly plain and commonplace, that a social relation of production should take on the form of a thing, so that the relation of persons in their work appears in the form of a mutual relation between things, and between things and persons. In commodities, this mystification is as yet very simple. It is more or less plain to everybody that a relation of commodities as exchange values is nothing but a mutual relation between persons in their productive activity. This semblance of simplicity disappears in higher productive relations.' Marx 1904 (1859), p. 37.

relationship reaches its most superficial and fetishized form.’²⁷Marx’s self-imposed task was to disclose the fetishistic forms of value and ground them in abstract labour as the substance of value in order to show and criticise the appropriation of surplus labour as surplus value by the capitalist ‘without equivalent’.²⁸

Accordingly, the labour theory of value *by methodological necessity* runs like a golden thread through *Capital* from beginning to end. For example, there could not be a calculus of the rate of profit as the relation of surplus value to the capital advanced, if we did not understand that value is determined as socially necessary labour time in a social average, nor could there be an understanding of ‘surplus’ at all: a surplus of *what*? What is needed is a theory of value in terms of value, not in terms of use value or (marginal) utility. As Fred Moseley puts it in his criticism against Arthur’s determination of labour as value substance in terms of use value:

‘Marx’s argument in Chapter 6 of volume 1 about the necessity of labor-power is solely in terms of *value*. Marx argued that, in order to expand in value, capital must be able to purchase on the market a commodity which is the source of additional value (not a source of additional use-values). It follows from Marx’s theory of value developed in Chapter 1 (that *labor* is the sole source of additional value), that this special commodity which capital requires can only be labour power. If one had a different theory of value, then perhaps one could explain capital’s expanding value in a different way. However, *in order to explain how capital expands in value, one needs at least some theory of value*. Since Chris [Arthur] has rejected Marx’s theory of value in Chapter 1, he has no theory of value with which to explain capital’s expansion of value.’²⁹

27 Marx 1981, p. 515. Marx further elaborates on the ‘completed fetish’ of interest-bearing capital : ‘There is still a further distortion. While interest is simply one part of the profit, i.e. the surplus -value, extorted from the worker by the functioning capitalist, it now appears conversely as if interest is the specific fruit of capital, the original thing, while profit, now transformed into the form of profit of enterprise, appears as a mere accessory and trimming added in the reproduction process. The fetish character of capital and the representation of this capital fetish is now complete.’ The increasing mystification taking place in the movement of value will be discussed in more detail below.

28 Marx 1976, p. 730. This process is most impressively demonstrated in *Capital*/ vol. II in the chapters on ‘Simple Reproduction’ and ‘Accumulation and Reproduction on an Expanded Scale’. Here at the latest Marx’s reveals the illusion of ‘equal exchange between capital and labour’.

29 Moseley 1997, p. 11. Emphasis added. Moseley here specifically refers to Arthur’s argument in Moseley 1993, p. 84-5: ‘What then is the condition next required to grant necessity to the existence of capital as self-valorization? ... It is here that we remember that at the outset we stated that a primary condition of exchange is the world of *use-values*. With capital we reach a form of circulation of commodities that is its own end, but the self-valorization process still rests for its possibility on the emergence into being of the *goods* themselves from some external source...The problem is solved if the *goods* are themselves produced by capital and reduced to moments in its

However, it is equally substantial that, methodologically, a ‘proof’ of value at the beginning is impossible. With Hegel’s expository methodology that Marx adopts (and in the famous letter to Kugelmann of July 1868³⁰), I think we can see why. Only in the *end* of the analysis, in the chapter on the Trinity Formula (the fetishisation of wages, profit and ground as the ‘three sources of wealth’ in the theory of Adam Smith and his ‘vulgarising’ followers), can we understand *why* and *how* the labour theory of value is the *secret* to the fetishism that value and its manifestation in money bring about, and of which equivalent exchange is its first superficial appearance. This methodological move is indeed close to Hegel’s circular motion in which the Idea, the final totality of cognition, in the end accordingly ‘gives itself again the form of immediacy’ in the context of the Being and Nothingness-dialectic: but this presupposition cannot be *enunciated* in the beginning. This nexus cannot be *expressed* as of yet. We find the same level of abstraction and gradual approximation towards the more complex and complete determination in *Capital*.

With this arguably uncontroversial diagnosis in mind, it is indeed strange that Arthur should embark on a mission to disavow the methodological place of the labour theory of value in Ch. 1 of Vol. 1 of *Capital*: ‘[...] in concentrating on the value form I leave aside initially any labour content – in this way departing from Marx who analysed both together.’³¹ ‘Before the positing of labour as “abstract”, there is the positing of commodities themselves as bearers of their abstract identity as values.’³² Arthur even goes to suggest that the alleged premature introduction of ‘labour’ (not, correctly, *abstract* labour) leads to the originally Engelsian interpretation of simple commodity production, albeit without giving an argument for this.³³ Let’s recall Arthur’s basic argument:

own circuit...The activity of production is an activity of labor. Hence, capital must make that activity its own activity. Only now does the presentation find it necessary to address labor. The limitlessness of accumulation inherent in the form of capital is given a solid ground in productive labor.’ Emphasis added.

30 ‘Considering ‘Centralblatt’, that man makes the biggest possible concession when he admits that if you think of value as anything at all, my conclusions are correct. The poor chap won’t see that if there were indeed no chapter on ‘value’ in my book, the analysis of the really existing relations that I provide would contain the proof and evidence of the real value relation ... That blather about the necessity to prove the concept of value is based on complete ignorance, both about the matter under discussion as about the scientific method. Every child knows that any nation that stopped working – I don’t want to say for a year, but only for a couple of weeks – would perish miserably (*verrecken*) ... Science is all about developing just *how* the law of value prevails.’ Marx 1961, p. 552-3.

31 Arthur 2004, pp. 79-80.

32 Arthur 2004, p. 80.

33 There is a footnote to this argument which says: ‘For a critique of such mistakes, see Chapter 2.’ In Chapter 2, Arthur – correctly, in my view – criticises the idea of simple commodity production bare and simple, but he forgets to prove the assumption that addressing labour ‘too early’ will lead to the Engelsian interpretation of simple commodity production. Therefore, he does nowhere

‘To begin with we shall analyse the commodity form itself and only at the end give grounds for picking out as systematically important those commodities which are products of labour.’³⁴

Arthur in his insistence that the ‘pure forms’ of capital should be studied first – and especially ‘the value form (as the germ of capital)’ before its ‘grounding in labour’³⁵ is analysed – claims that starting with exchange brings certain advantages: ‘[...] the question of form is so crucial that the presentation starts with the form of exchange, bracketing entirely the question of the mode of production [sic], if any, of the objects of exchange.’³⁶ This has the advantage that we begin with the same perception as that of everyday consciousness, namely, that in the bourgeois epoch nearly everything is capable of taking on commodity-form, and we avoid an appearance of arbitrariness in concentration from the outset only on products of labour.’³⁷ This passage – Arthur’s insistence that in order to fully concentrate on the social *form*, we need to bracket ‘entirely the question of the mode of production’ – invites the suspicion that he *conflates social form with commodity exchange*, for it is

give an argument for this contention.

34 Arthur 2004, p. 85. In this passage, he also suggests that Marx was not right in subsuming all commodities to being ‘products of labour’. This is an argument which in my view both Patrick Murray and Fred Moseley have already successfully refuted. See Murray 2005, esp. pp. 76–79 and Moseley (1997), p. 9: ‘Chris [Arthur’s] ... criticism of Marx is that, even if the postulate of the values of commodities is accepted, Marx did not prove that labor must be the substance of value, and in particular Marx arbitrarily excluded commodities which are not products of labor (like land) from his deduction. ... My response [is] that it ignores key elements of Marx’s overall logical method. According to Marx’s method, the price of land is explain by Marx on the basis of the rent of land, i.e. on the basis of the future expectations of rent or “capitalized” rent. Rent itself is explained in Part 6 of Volume 3 as one part of the total amount of surplus-value (along with other parts of surplus-value such as interest, commercial profit, etc.). According to Marx’s logical method (as I have emphasized in several recent papers), the total amount of surplus-value is determined prior to its division into the individual parts of rent, interest, etc. The determination of the total amount of surplus-value is the main subject of Volume 1 of *Capital* (the analysis of capital in general). The individual parts of surplus-value (or the distribution of surplus-value) are then explained in Volume 3 (an abstract analysis of competition) on the basis of the assumption that the total amount of surplus-value has already been determined. Therefore, according to Marx’s method, the price of land cannot be explained in Chapter 1 of Volume 1. Instead, land and the price of land are “abstracted from” in Volume 1 (just as are the other individual parts of the total surplus-value), and then explained at a more concrete level of analysis in Volume 3. These important aspects of Marx’s logical method were overlooked by Boehm-Bawerk, and by almost everybody else since, apparently including Chris [Arthur].’

35 Arthur 2006, p. 10.

36 Note here that by ‘bracketing entirely ... the mode of production’, Arthur himself invites the possibility of a pre- or non-capitalist society as the object of Marx’s study. From the outset, Marx’s object however is the capitalist mode of production as Arthur admits in other places. His rebuttal of the labour theory of value and the structural relation between value, abstract labour and money for the beginning of *Capital* brings forth consequences Arthur himself seems to be unaware of. That Arthur succumbs to the ‘logical-historical’ approach that he elsewhere criticises (see Ch. 2) has also been noticed by Bidet, see Bidet 2005, p. 129 ff.

37 Arthur 2004, p. 86.

illogical to imply that ‘proper attention to social form requires bracketing production’, as Patrick Murray has in my view correctly objected, asking: ‘Is not production form-determined by value?’³⁸ However, *social form also implies production* and is neither conceptually, nor systematically, completely absorbed by the concept of commodity exchange.

The desideratum to start with ‘everyday consciousness’ is also problematic in a different aspect of Marx’s critique of fetishism. Methodologically, Marx lays his cards on the table by introducing not only the ‘fetish-character of the commodity’, but also revealing its *secret* (that many commentators seem to ignore). The secret to the fetish-character is explicitly *defined* in Marx’s labour theory of value, as early as in the first chapter of *Capital*. The critical disclosure of the *continuous increase* of mystification and the inverted relation of appearance and essence, as reflected in the economic categories, is that which Marx’s analysis *aims at*:

‘... in the midst of the accidental and ever-fluctuating exchange relations between products, the labour time socially necessary to produce them asserts itself as a regulative law of nature. In the same way, the Law of Gravity asserts itself when a person’s house collapses on top of him. The determination of the magnitude of value by labour-time is therefore a *secret* hidden under the apparent movements in the relative values of commodities.’³⁹

And here, I contend, lies precisely the power of Marx’s critique: by giving us, the interested reader, a hermeneutical and critical tool at hand by which to decipher and disclose the growing mystification taking place in conventional economical categories *right at the start of the presentation*.⁴⁰ This mystification or fetishism is both one of ‘science’, as well as of the agents in the daily capitalist mode of production and circulation. However, the fetishism of commodities, of which its *secret* lies in the ‘determination of the magnitude of value by labour-time’, or the labour theory of value, as Marx clearly spells out⁴¹, is in Arthur’s view ‘too hastily’ related to labour: ‘(Marx) has a critique of form (fetishism)

38 Murray 2005, p. 72.

39 Marx 1976a, p. 168. Emphasis added.

40 This invokes the idea that, while Hegel’s movement of the concept is the *liberation from* a false consciousness (predominantly corresponding to his method in the PhG), Marx’s presentation shows the opposite movement of the (economic) concepts *towards an increasing mystification* falling prey to fetishism and ideology, with the Trinity Formula at the end as the fetishised consciousness’ ‘cherry on top’. We will discuss this in more detail in the last section of this essay.

41 Section 4 of the first Chapter of Capital volume 1 is titled: ‘The Fetishism of the Commodity *and its Secret*’, not just ‘The Fetishism of the Commodity’ as one often gets the impression even in literature dealing exclusively with the fetishism paradigm. See e.g. Geras (1971), Böhme (1997), Dimoulis and Milios (1999).

as well as a critique of content (exploitation); but in his anxiety to relate value to production he had already jumped – far too hastily – to labour as its substance.⁴² This sounds as though Marx's decision to present abstract labour as the substance of value, indeed, to be so notorious as to 'dive down from the phenomena of exchange-value to labour as the substance of value in the first three pages of *Capital*'⁴³ is a sloppy, or indeed, 'hasty', but at least a very careless methodological move. Yet again, nothing could be further from the truth. For Marx, value is not only vaguely 'related' to the production process, it is its outcome, its 'truth' in the precise Hegelian sense of the 'comprehended Idea'. As such, the production process is necessarily presupposed. Marx himself has time and again indicated that in the presentation of his object, the capitalist mode of production and reproduction, '... the categories express forms of being, determinations of existence – and sometimes only individual aspects – of this particular society, of this subject, and that *even from the scientific standpoint* it therefore by no means begins at the moment when it is first discussed *as such*'⁴⁴ – namely, in its superficial presentations of equivalent exchange. Marx makes very clear that to begin with the circulation of commodities *sans phrase* cannot 'as such' represent a pure, unconditioned categorial presentation of *Capital*. Circulation presupposes commodity production – not just in 'reality', but also in its scientific representation. Even more so, 'the autonomous sphere of exchange' is a direct *expression* of mystification:

'An analysis of the specific form of the division of labour, of the conditions of production on which it rests, of the economic relations of the members of society within which these relations are dissolved, would show that *the whole system of bourgeois production is implied*, so that exchange value can appear as the simple point of departure on the surface, and the exchange process, as it presents itself in simple circulation, can appear as the simple social metabolism, which nevertheless encompasses the whole of production as well as consumption. It would then result from this that other entangled relations of production which more or less collide with the freedom and independence of the individuals and the economic relations of those, are implied, so that they can appear as free private producers in the simple relation of buyers and sellers within the circulation process. From the standpoint of circulation, however, these relations are obliterated.'⁴⁵

42 Arthur 2004, p. 87.
43 Arthur 2004, p. 12.
44 Marx 1986, p. 43.
45 Marx 1987, p. 466.

Hence, 'The Commodity', or rather its value form, like the Hegelian Idea, is discussed as the result of a process that *will yet have to be analysed, but is simultaneously presupposed*. It is the task of the Critique of Political Economy to unravel the 'inner connection' ('inneres Band') between the forms (value, the commodity, money, capital) as how they present themselves to our 'everyday consciousness' – in exchange or circulation – and their real *content*, springing from the 'hidden abode of production'. This is why, as Jacques Bidet has correctly emphasised, *all* the categories of the market (private property, production for exchange, the commodity division of labour, concrete and abstract labour (!), productivity, socially necessary labour that the market identified within a branch as average labour and between branches as abstract labour) 'are already those forming the framework of the formulations and arguments of Volume 1, Chapter One.'⁴⁶

An attitude which holds that commodity exchange must be analysed separately falls itself prey to the fetishism of the forms of appearance. It is therefore not only dubious, but methodologically *unfeasible* to analyse the production process 'before the grounding of value in labour is legitimate.'⁴⁷ It is unfeasible, because the organisation of the labour and production process is necessarily *based upon value and surplus-value*. To unhinge the necessary correlation between abstract labour, value and money would undermine Marx's critical framework right from the outset. In this sense, Arthur's remark that '[w]hen capital attempts to ground itself on production, it runs into economic determination springing from use value. This should have dethroned value; but instead the opposite happens; the spectre prevails'⁴⁸ is characteristic for his misrecognition of Marx's critical method. He not only muddles the levels of a scientific presentation with that of the object of critique – capital is to be grounded on production *precisely because* from its expositional analysis follows that use value is peripheral to the production process, which is also its *critique* –, but is indicative of 'bad

46 Bidet 2005, p. 128.

47 Arthur 2006, p. 10. Arthur's claim that „capitalist production must be theorised before the grounding of value in labour is legitimate“ - to paraphrase: capitalist production must be theorised before we can know how to theorise it – is, apart from its analytical Marxist undertone, astoundingly un-Hegelian. Like Kant's project of examining the faculties of cognition before having cognition at all, it would be a *petitio principii*, as Hegel has shown: ‚But to want to have cognition before we have any is as absurd as the wise resolve of Scholasticus to learn to *swim before he ventured into the water*.‘ (Hegel 1991, p. 34) But here is where Arthur agrees with the Uno School: ‚Like them (the Uno School) I think that the introduction by Marx of a posited *ground* for labour before the *form* of value is fully theorised represents a residue of classical political economy.‘ (ibid.) This argument is, strictly speaking, absurd. Classical political economy has nowhere made the distinction between concrete and abstract human labour, of which *only the latter*, as Marx intends to show in the opening pages of *Capital*, is productive of value. Therefore the definition of abstract human labour as the social substance of value is precisely *what distinguishes Marx* from classical political economy.

48 Arthur 2004, p. 168.

abstraction', as Patrick Murray rightly complains.⁴⁹ Arthur's claim is furthermore dubious, because the content of the later chapters cannot be understood in abstraction from any of the conditions that Marx unfolds in the first four chapters. One may ask: would it be *less of a presupposition* if the labour theory of value were only presented at the outset of Chapter 6? But there are reasonable doubts for introducing it only here, because just as at the beginning, one yet cannot *understand* why the value substance should be abstract labour. If indeed Marx had decided to present his value form analysis without making any reference to labour⁵⁰, we would have understood *that* value is 'necessarily' presented in money: but we would not have understood *why*⁵¹: we would not have understood that money is an already fetishised form of value in which its relation to the expenditure of human labour as abstract labour is obfuscated.

Arthur admits in a different passage that the presentation of the Hegelian method as a dialectical exposition of categories in their necessary inner coherence contains a moment of presupposition: 'Thus in a dialectical argument the meanings of concepts undergo shifts because the significance of any element in the total picture cannot be concretely defined at the outset.'⁵² Arthur also correctly sees that Hegel's exposition 'is the logical development of a system of categories, or forms of being, from the most elementary and indeterminate to the richest and most concrete'⁵³ and that, accordingly, value 'is to be understood only in its forms of development.'⁵⁴ But he fails to engage this insight to the context of the methodological position of the labour theory of value. It may be useful to remind us of Hegel's exposition in which he clearly states that pure being is the unity of knowledge with itself – knowledge of the concept as *self*-knowledge:

49 Murray 2005, p. 73.

50 The concept of 'labour' appears 241 times in the first three sections of *Capital* alone.

51 For Kuruma Samez , 'why' a commodity becomes money is the topic of *Capital's* section on Fetishism in Chapter 1 of vol. 1. See Kuruma 1957, p. 41 and Kuruma 2009, p. 65: 'Marx is raising a theoretical question not posed before. The question involves examining why the value of a commodity appears in the form of a quantity of another commodity that is equated to it ... rather than being directly expressed as a certain quantity of labor-time. In relation to money in particular, the theory of the fetish-character analyzes the *why* of money, whereas the theory of the value-form looks at the *how* of money.' Murray raises the same point: 'We want to know not only how it is that diverse commodities exchange for one another but also why each has the specific exchange-value it does. Because he insists that the value-form is contentless, Arthur's answer to the first question teeters on tautology: commodities are mutually exchangeable because they have the "quality of being exchangeable."' Murray 2005, p. 72.

52 Arthur 2004. p. 25.

53 Arthur 2004, p. 83.

54 Ibid.

'... by considering pure being as the unity with which knowledge converges (*zusammenfallen*) on its highest peak of unification with its object, then knowledge has disappeared into this unity and has not left no difference from it [i.e. unity] and hence no determination of it.'⁵⁵

Not only the rhetoric and choice of wording is reminiscent of Marx's summary of the genesis of the money form: 'The movement through which this process has been mediated vanishes in its own result, leaving no trace behind.'⁵⁶ Also the method of exposition is presented in this Hegelian fashion to demonstrate the necessity of the semantic presupposition taking place at the beginning. What exactly does 'semantic presupposition' mean in this context, and why is it a structurally necessary prerequisite of the logical method? In his seminal work on an *Outline of a Theory of Dialectic (Grundzüge einer Theorie der Dialektik)*, Dieter Wandschneider examines the discrepancy of the semantic and pragmatic function of the concept to argue that the semantic-pragmatic 'cleft' at the presentation's beginning is by no means a 'deficient' mode of presentation, but necessitated by the exposition itself, and hence, adhering to the dialectical method as developing its own movement from the incomplete to the gradually complete by virtue of the categories' own semantic-pragmatic cleft⁵⁷:

'For a theory of dialectic, two aspects seem to be of fundamental significance: on the one hand, the view ... according to which every logical category (with the exception of the final determination) contains a *semantic-pragmatic discrepancy (semantisch-pragmatische Diskrepanz)*. It consists in the fact that the *explicit meaning* of a category does not express all that is implicitly *presupposed (präsupponiert)* for its meaning. That this must be the case immediately makes sense; since in order to explicate a particular meaning, the whole apparatus of logical categories and principles must be presupposed (vorausgesetzt werden). This tension between the semantic content (Gehalt) and that which is pragmatically presupposed for the argumentative acts (Argumentationsakte) that precede it, necessitates the introduction of categories by which this "pragmatic surplus meaning" is successively further semantically explicated [and diminished, EL]. In other words: the semantic-pragmatic

55 Hegel 1986b, p. 72.

56 Marx 1976, p. 187.

57 Pepperell discusses the semantic-pragmatic-cleft in terms of what is 'implicit' and 'explicit' in a concept. I think this terminology is useful, but the semantic and pragmatic aspects determine more specifically 'what' is implicit and explicit in a concept. See Pepperell 2010, p. 137.

discrepancy contained in a category which, under specific conditions, can be exacerbated to a performative contradiction, makes the necessity to introduce ever new categories plausible, as long as the “pragmatic surplus meaning” remains.’⁵⁸

The meaning of Being therefore enunciates something that it is not: and what Being is *not*, is Nothingness. Yet, it *is* nothingness, but as such, it *is not* it, for it should semantically contain a *difference* from nothingness. However, the category of ‘difference’ is by far not introduced at this stage of the presentation. While it is pragmatically presupposed, pure (or rather, ‘poor’) Being cannot *mean* itself without falling prey to its opposite, Nothingness. At the beginning of the Logic therefore, the semantic-pragmatic discrepancy is the greatest. We still do not have the semantic means to understand the meaning of Being (that, to make matters even more complicated, is of course the immediate form of appearance of the Idea) ‘correctly’: the *whole presentation is presupposed* to understand it ‘correctly’, or truthfully. We will see in a while how this reciprocal transition (Umschlagen) from one category to the other is the prototype of the antinomical structure that motivates the dialectical movement. The point here is to realise that the same applies to the beginning of Marx’s *Capital*, and specifically the category of abstract labour which is determined as the substance of value: *the whole system of derivations is presupposed* to thoroughly understand it – but this is not a ‘defect’ in Marx’s presentation. It is rather the specific anti-dogmatic character of the dialectical mode of exposition itself that ‘accompanies’ thought and serves as an aid to criticise its own misapprehensions, instead of delivering ready-made definitions of concepts in a positivistic sense that, rather than *promote* thought, substitute it.

In so far as the method of Hegel’s *Logic* is concerned it is therefore wrong that Arthur suggests that ‘it is self-evident that the result cannot be “contained” in the premise, for the latter is poorer in content than the former.’⁵⁹ The result is not only contained in the premise – by virtue of the scientific mode of presentation which is necessarily a circle (though

58 Wandschneider 1995, p. 26. The other ‘aspect of fundamental significance’ for the theory of dialectic for Wandschneider is the concept of ‘self-referential negation’ which, for systematic reasons, will be discussed in the next section. Wandschneider points out that, in so far as the semantic-pragmatic discrepancy is concerned, the works by Wolfgang Wieland (1978) and Vittorio Hösle (1987) have been influential also for his position.

59 Arthur 2004, p. 83. I disagree with Bidet at this point who seems to think that Arthur accepts Hegel’s idea of the impossibility of an unmediated beginning: ‘... Arthur proposes a dialectical mode of exposition, moving simultaneously forward and backward ... Only the end defines the beginning.’ Bidet 2005, p. 125-6. In contrast, Arthur insists that ‘an absolute beginning without imposed conditions is needed.’ Arthur 2004, p. 158.

strictly not circular in the formal-logical sense⁶⁰), it is *its own premise*:

‘The essential (das Wesentliche) for science is not so much to begin with a pure immediate being, but that the whole shows to be a circuit in itself in which the first [determination] will be the last and the last will be the first.’⁶¹

Therefore, Arthur is mistaken to hypostatise that to follow the model of Hegel’s dialectic, ‘an absolute beginning without imposed conditions is needed.’⁶² This claim only shows Arthur’s misrecognition of the critical intent of the exposition in which the hypostasation of an allegedly ‘pure’ or ‘absolute’ content is itself shown as a fallacy of the intellect. To the contrary, the beginning of the *Logic* thematises the desideratum of ‘purity’ and ‘absoluteness’ – or, as it were, ‘immediacy’ – as the *fetish* of the intellect that is as of yet untouched by the intricate operations of conceptual dialectic. The demand to start with purity is, in Hegel’s words, an expression of the uncomprehended (‘das Unverstandene’) in itself, by virtue of which it must perish.⁶³

However, there is a yet another profound difficulty lurking behind Arthur’s expositional conceptualisation that Jacques Bidet has pointed to: by Arthur’s suggestion that ‘[i]f value depends for its reality on the full development of capitalist production, then the concepts of Marx’s first chapter can only have an *abstract* character ...’⁶⁴, he ‘seems to confuse two questions.’⁶⁵ The first is the *historical* one, and (in this context, at least) uncontested: namely that value can only emerge on the basis of an already implemented capitalist production and reproduction process. Value is therefore an *ex post*, not an *a priori*-phenomenon. It also involves a vast cataclysm of the juridico-political complex that historically accompanies the genesis of capitalist production. But this does not concern the second question which is a question of *theoretical presentation*: ‘[Arthur] concludes that, in the course of the exposition,

60 D. Wandschneider shows that the logical presupposition at the beginning of the Logic is precisely not a *petitio principii*, because in contrast to this ‘circular’ form of argumentation, it can *account for and define* its content: ‘It is decisive that the form of self foundational reasoning (Selbstbegründung) [by which is meant the fact that logic/thought/arguments cannot be fundamentally doubted except on the grounds of logic/thought/arguments itself, EL], is a *foundation* (Begründung), insofar it is not founded on arbitrary suppositions, but has a logically cogent character. Circular reasoning and self foundational reasoning are not the same.’ Wandschneider 1995, p. 19.

61 Hegel 1986b, p. 70. Note also that Hegel uses the past tense in this passage which for him is a consequence of having already surveyed and grasped the whole development.

62 Arthur 2004, p. 158.

63 Hegel 1986b, p. 86.

64 Arthur 2004, p. 26.

65 Bidet 2005, p. 130.

the *concept* of value cannot be fully developed before the specifically capitalist form.’⁶⁶ This conflation of historical development with the form of presentation is accordingly inviting to the ‘logico-historical’ approach that Arthur rejects in other places.⁶⁷

Let us see how Arthur solves the problem of the beginning which, while being rich in semantic and pragmatic presuppositions, cannot account for those by itself.

3. The Application of Hegel's Logic to the Presentation of the Value Form

In this section, I will examine Arthur's attempt to elucidate the methodological structure of Marx' value form analysis by applying it to Hegel's greater division of the *Logic*. In it, commodity exchange corresponds to the Doctrine of Being, the doubling of commodity and money corresponds to the Doctrine of Essence and capital corresponds to the Doctrine of the Concept.⁶⁸ Unfortunately, Arthur does not give reasons for this particular correspondence, and it is also not strictly followed in the analysis of the second part of ‘Marx's *Capital* and Hegel's *Logic*’⁶⁹ (Chapter 5 of *The New Dialectic and Marx's Capital*). But this, I contend, is where one of the problems of Arthur's attempt lies: a random selection of categories of Hegel's *Logic* is selectively and arbitrarily applied to a selection of more or less random categories of the first five chapters in *Capital*. However, there are two instances in which Arthur draws on the dialectical-categorical development of the *beginning* of Hegel's Logic with Being and Nothingness. One is to be found in the latter part of ‘Marx's *Capital* and Hegel's *Logic*’, one discussed as the dialectic of absence and presence of value in Chapter 8, ‘The Spectre of Capital’. Though, initially, I have planned (and written) a discussion of both chapters, for reasons of space I will restrict my discussion to Arthur's presentation in the chapter on ‘Marx's *Capital* and Hegel's *Logic*’. The reason is simple: The ‘dialectic’ of presence and absence adds no cognitive gain (Erkenntnisgewinn) to Arthur's ‘homologisation’ between Hegel and Marx which is clearly enough illustrated in ‘Marx's *Capital* and Hegel's *Logic*.’

In Arthur's reconstruction of the allegedly homologous categories of Marx's value form theory and the beginning of Hegel's *Logic*, Being

66 Ibid.

67 See also Arthur's in my view justified critique of Ernest Mandel in ‘Marx, Orthodoxy, Labour, Value’, in Arthur 2000, pp. 5-11.

68 See Arthur 2004, p. 79.

69 By the ‘second or latter part of this chapter’ I mean the text following the subheader ‘The Presentation of the Value Form’, in Arthur 2004, pp. 89 ff.

and Nothingness – in spite of being the first categories of the Doctrine of Being in which ‘Quality’ is thematic – get almost no place, never mind being categories whose motif is excessively justified in the *Logic*'s introduction. Arthur laconically applies being and ‘nothing’ in an unrelated and arbitrary manner to ‘commodity exchange’ in which their logical status is rendered completely unclear:

‘Given exchange, we can speak of commodities in terms of the elementary opposition between Being and Nothing treated by Hegel at the beginning of his *Logic*. They have their **being** in the circuits of exchange; but as yet they reveal **nothing** about themselves that guarantees this status; indeed they regularly disappear from the space of exchange relations, perhaps to be consumed. Their being become **determinate**, and fixed in this sphere, is that of exchangeable commodities. Commodities are distinguished from being goods in general by the **quality** of being exchangeable.’⁷⁰

In what way can we say that Hegel's categories form the background for this assumption? Perhaps more importantly, in what way does Arthur's presentation obey the self-imposed task of conceptual purity he finds in Hegel? First of all, Hegel's categories at the beginning do not signify ‘things’ such as would be the commodity. It is not until the Doctrine of Essence far later in the presentation that Hegel thematises ‘existence’ and ‘things’ at all.⁷¹ Really existing, spatially extended and identifiable objects in time strictly speaking do not form a part of the *Logic* at all, but belong to the Philosophy of Nature in Hegel's overarching system.⁷² Yet, Arthur presupposes the existence of ‘things’ as this earliest presentation, undermining his own claim of conceptual purity and conflating different levels of presentation. But if even if we grant that the ‘being’ of commodities is the very being that is thematic at the beginning of the Logic – where do the commodities belong? In other words, what concept in the *Logic* corresponds to that of the

70 Arthur 2004, p. 90. Bold print in the original to highlight Hegel's terminology. Arthur applies the same procedure to Marx's concept of ‘Money’ in correspondence to concepts of Hegel's Doctrine of Essence and Marx's concept of ‘Capital’ in correspondence to concepts of Hegel's Doctrine of the Concept. See Arthur 2004, p. 95 and Arthur 2004, p. 101. For reasons of space, the latter two ‘homologies’ cannot be discussed. We shall already see from the discussion of Arthur's declared homology between ‘Commodity Exchange’ with the Doctrine of Being how the single conceptual ‘homologies’ are flawed by virtue of being positioned at different levels of abstraction in Hegel's *Logic* alone.

71 See The Doctrine of Essence, where in the second Section on ‘Appearance’ and the chapter on ‘Existence’, ‘The Thing and its Properties’ (Das Ding und seine Eigenschaften) becomes thematic for the first time. Hegel 1986c, p. 129.

72 See Hegel 1986d in the Section on ‘Physics’, §§ 272-336.

commodity?⁷³ To be sure, in the preceding section, Arthur introduces a specific interpretative schema by which to determine the commodity as the starting point, the triad of 'sociation, dissociation, and association' that we also find in Geert Reuten and Michael Williams⁷⁴. With the help of this heuristic, Arthur identifies the 'sociation-dissociation contradiction' as 'the presupposition of the entire epoch, and hence our presentation.'⁷⁵

'...it is association through exchange that gives this contradiction 'room to move'; the first concrete category is therefore this mediation, and we study its further development; this first category of *movement* determines goods as commodities, and hence the first *object* of analysis is the commodity; a unity of use value and exchange value; this doubling is a relation in which the form, the abstract universal, dominates the matter, the particular use values; the value form is therefore the theme of our categorial dialectic.'⁷⁶

How is Hegel's, or for that matter, Marx's method, reflected or applied in this assumption? Note here that the problem under discussion is Arthur's particular application of the alleged homology between Hegel's categories to that of Marx, not a general rejection of such an attempt.⁷⁷ It is however unclear how in Arthur's view either the category of 'movement' or the category of 'association through exchange' that supposedly necessitates the category of the commodity finds its correlate in Hegel's Logic of Being. Let me first look at the category of 'movement': how do we derive the commodity from it? First, Arthur seems to confuse the *quality* of an object (that it moves, circulates) with being a *cause* of it. Saying that 'this first category of *movement* determines goods as commodities' takes one of the commodities' qualities as its own principal cause - while it would be no less reasonable to assume either 'time' or 'space' rather than

73 In the appendix to this chapter, Arthur provides a table with the corresponding concepts in both Hegel's system and Marx's presentation of the first five chapters of Capital as an overview of the preceding argument. But just *how* the correspondence between The Doctrine of Being and the Commodity is justified, remains completely obscure. The same goes for the other conceptual correspondences (e.g. The Doctrine of Essence corresponds to Money, with the structural moment of 'reflection and mediation: the being-for-itself and show of the Concept' functioning as an interpretative schema without showing *how* this claim concretely applies). See Arthur 2004, p. 108-9.

74 See Reuten/Williams 1989.

75 Arthur 2004, p. 88.

76 Arthur 2004, p. 89. Emphasis i.t.o.

77 For an intensive discussion of the commodity as the starting point in relation to its 'subterranean' critique of Hegel that also functions as its methodological presupposition, let me only refer to Pepperell 2010, p. 142 ff. The view that *Capital* starts with the Commodity is however not uncontested. See Holloway 2015.

'movement' as 'causing' factors of the commodity. The relation between 'movement' and 'the commodity' cannot be presented in a way that discloses the categories' *strictly necessary nexus*, so that the homology Arthur draws is questionable. Second, while it is true that, in the commodity form, the form dominates the matter – this observation can be made without referring to the category of movement at all. Besides, while 'form' and 'content' belong to the Logic, 'movement' is not a logical motive, but, again, belongs to the Philosophy of Nature.⁷⁸ All in all, the categories Arthur picks from Hegel's *Logic* in order to 'identify' them with those of Marx's exposition belong to entirely different levels of abstraction in Hegel's system.

The category of 'association through exchange' is even more questionable as having a categorial correspondence in Being or Nothingness. Its logical status is completely obscure as measured against the *Logic*.

But let us come back to the conceptual derivation by which Arthur identifies Being and Nothingness in Marx's presentation. How should we interpret the context in which Arthur extracts the important category of Nothingness to apply it to the exchange of commodities? '[The commodities] reveal **nothing** about themselves that guarantees this status [of **being**]; indeed they regularly disappear from the space of exchange relations, perhaps to be consumed'. Arthur's analysis of being and nothingness stops here. With this predication, we are unable to discern any meaningful conceptual nexus or correspondence between the notion of Nothingness in the context of the Logic's beginning and Arthur's own interpretation in the self-proclaimed context of Marx's value form analysis. However, there is a deeper structural reason for Arthur's lopsided derivation of nothingness from the context of Hegel's *Logic*: Arthur not only underestimates the *significance* of the category of 'nothingness' which introduces the *motif of negation* to Hegel's Logic, but provides no explanation of its *strategic role* within the dialectical movement, as e.g. theories of the antinomical structure of the category of Nothingness do. What Arthur does not take notice of is the complexity and significance of the first determinations that give rise to the dialectical categorial development in the first place, and with it, the *dialectic at work* in the structure of Hegel's Logic. This is all stranger as Arthur proclaims to have established a 'New Dialectic' that is directly *informed* by Hegel's form determinations – without having a thorough understanding of Hegel's method itself.

To come back to the text, in what way does Arthur then justify that 'nothing' is revealed and that, 'they regularly disappear from the

78 In the section on 'Mechanics' in the First Department of the Philosophy of Nature of the *Encyclopedia*. Hegel 1986d, esp. §§ 262-3.

space (sic) of exchange relations, perhaps to be consumed.' It remains unclear which logical status the categories of 'revelation', 'space' and 'consumption' (and the notion 'perhaps', for that matter!) have in Marx's context – viewed through the lens of the *Logic*'s beginning – and what their inner connection is. Again, the categories of 'space' and 'consumption' precisely do not belong to the *Logic* at all, least of all in their conceptual relation, and have no discernible correspondence in Marx's conceptual scheme.⁷⁹ On the other hand, Arthur freely omits the important category of Becoming in this presentation as the precondition for the categories' concretisation into Dasein and Negation, and instead integrates the category of 'quality' which is not part of the categorial deduction at all, but the chapter's encompassing theme!⁸⁰ Arthur's choice as to *which* concepts of Hegel's *Logic* are reflected in Marx's value form analysis and which are *not*, seems to follow no discernible line of deduction and renders their selection thoroughly arbitrary.⁸¹

For now however, let us make an excursus on the important concept of Nothingness for a while and shortly elucidate the important heuristic of antinomical structure. The category of Negation in Hegel's *Logic*, the more complex and advanced form of Nothingness and the motor of dialectical thought, has its systematic place in the chapter on 'Dasein' as the more concrete form of Being. It shows in itself its own necessity *of* and *for* thought (*zeigt an sich selbst seine eigene Denknöwendigkeit*), because, as 'pure' Nothingness, it would be *unthinkable*, as I will soon show. The same applies to Being and its 'self-sameness' with Nothingness. In other words, in the indeterminacy and abstraction of the 'unthinkable' and as yet uncomprehended categories of Being and Nothingness where an as of yet incomplete determination of nothingness is first introduced, *immediacy becomes thematic as its own impossibility*, as shown above. One may argue that, in this case, Hegel should have started with the category of 'immediacy' (or 'indeterminacy', or the 'indeterminable') without further ado – but even in this case,

79 The objection that commodities are produced for consumption completely misses the mark of Marx's value form analysis: 'The use-values of commodities provide the material for a special branch of knowledge, namely the commercial knowledge of commodities.' Marx 1976a, p. 126. See also '... the exchange relation of commodities is characterized precisely by its abstraction from their use value.' Marx 1976a, p. 127.

80 It is the title of the First Section in the *Logic*: „Determinacy (Quality)“. See Hegel 1986b, p. 82.

81 The usefulness of Being, Nothingness, and Becoming as a conceptual template to analyse *social* process are dubious precisely because they do not refer to 'real processes' – i.e. processes taking place outside of thought – at all. Arthur is aware of that. As one reviewer of the present essay however suggested, the dialectic of Being and Nothingness was pertinent in commodity exchange, because there were jobs which involve producing 'nothingness' – we pay people to take out our trash, for example. But this idea invites a category mistake. Arthur, on the other hand, is very clear on separating Hegel's presentation from a direct application for describing 'really existing capitalism'. He correctly locates Hegel's and Marx's presentation at high levels of conceptual abstraction, even if I do not agree with the specific way he identifies both.

further abstraction would have shown that 'immediacy' already contains a negation: namely, that of mediation (or 'mediacy', *Vermittlung*). In other words, positing 'immediacy' (*Unmittelbarkeit*) as first category, will show itself to be the *other* of – the *negation* of – mediacy. As such, it contains a *category of reflection*, the difference to mediacy that only becomes thematic in the Doctrine of Essence – but we are still in the realm of Being. Consequently, we find that the category of immediacy is therefore derived, contrary to its alleged 'purity'. We come to find Being and Nothingness as the first categories, however incomplete, 'furthest from the truth' – and as such, mediated. I have shown above how Hegel perceives of the beginning not as pure, but as the 'result' of a circular process in which 'pure knowledge' (a contradiction in terms) is 'released' (entlassen) to its sheer form in immediacy.

The point I want to make here in almost inexcusable brevity, drawing on the works of Kesselring (1981) and Wandschneider (1995) is that the dialectical exposition of Being and Nothing has to be understood as an *antinomical structure, containing an antinomical contradiction*. This antinomical structure succumbs the categorial movement of dialectical thought at its most general, so that giving an account on the function of the antinomical structure will simultaneously give an outline to a *theory of dialectic* and highlight the essential role of negation within it. In the following, what is at stake is Arthur's claim that the presentation of the value form in *Capital* vol. 1 and Hegel's logic 'are to be *identified*'; we are not simply applying Hegel's logic to an independent content'⁸² and that the 'forms' of value 'are in effect of such abstract purity as to constitute a real incarnation of the ideas of Hegel's logic.' Arthur's reading as explicated above shall be contrasted with two approaches that deal with the dialectic of Being and Nothingness in the beginning of the *Logic* and deliver a core understanding for Hegel's dialectic, in order to question the validity of Arthur's claim. In that sense, the following is not at all an exhaustive presentation of Hegel's dialectic, but rather designates a minimum standard by which we can begin to decipher its complexity.

4. The Antinomical Structure of Being and Nothingness

Like the author of the present essay, Kesselring's pioneering work on the role of the antinomical structure assumes that the categories of Being and Nothingness as a 'germ-like ... concrete totality' ('keimhaft angelegte konkrete Totalität') can only be legitimised 'in hindsight' ('im Rückblick').⁸³ The search for an 'absolute' beginning – a regress that

82 Arthur 2004, p. 82.

83 Kesselring 1981, p. 566. Arthur interestingly also uses the concept of the 'germ' of value in its 'immediacy', but provides no method with which to show its 'unfolding', whether in

is simultaneously a progress – would show that thought itself is the ultimate abstraction. The problem however is that thought itself cannot be abstracted from. What *can* be abstracted from, however, is the *content* of thought. It is Being in its ‘pure’ form that abstracts from all content of thought, so that Being ‘is’ the most abstract, most indeterminate concept. However, every logical predication to be made about Being must necessarily ‘falsify’ or ‘distort’ its own character, so that we must look for a further method to determine the indeterminate:

‘Consciousness resp. Thought, because it abstracts from all abstraction, now only confronts Being, which is in a constitution (*Verfassung*) that is falsified by any sound sentence aimed at characterising it. Because who talks or thinks about *Being* has in truth not abstracted from her own thought. Accordingly, if Hegel describes the development from Being to Nothingness and Becoming towards Dasein (Determinate Being), he moves within outer reflection (on the standpoint of ‘pure Being’, language and discursive thought would be impossible).’⁸⁴

The presentation of the categorial development would only be possible on the basis of abstraction from thought (inner reflection), and, since that would require a cognitive performance, it is factually (self-) contradictory, and hence, impossible. Kesselring however argues that this ‘impossibility’ is of constitutive significance for the understanding of the *Logic*’ method, because it is translatable into the legitimate relation of an antinomical structure, by which the development of categories is *initiated* in the first place. To recapitulate: the thought-determinations (Denkbestimmungen) of ‘immediate’ Being and Nothingness, being pure quality, evade any determinable content. This is why Being and Nothingness, in their indeterminable sameness (differentiating Being from Nothingness would already imply the thought-reflexion ‘is not’, which would render ‘immediate’ Being determinate, and therefore ‘not-immediate’) cannot be provided with a *predication*. Consequently, Hegel does not say what Being and Nothingness *are*, but uses an anakoluth to signify their sheer unthinkability: ‘*Being, pure Being* – without any further determination.’⁸⁵ and ‘Nothingness, pure Nothingness; it is simple self-sameness, perfect emptiness, indeterminacy and contentlessness (Inhaltslosigkeit); undifferentiatedness in itself (Ununterschiedenheit in ihm selbst).’⁸⁶.

hindsight or from the outset.

84 Kesselring 1981, p. 571.
85 Hegel 1986b, p. 82.
86 Hegel 1986b, p. 83.

The prequisition for the antinomical structure initiating the dialectical development is the fact that Being is ‘determined as indeterminate’ (*als unbestimmt bestimmt*). This leads to antinomy (A):

(A) **either** Being is indeterminate, but then it is wrong that it is determinate (even ‘as indeterminate’)
or Being is determinate, but then it is wrong to determine it as indeterminate.⁸⁷

Antinomy (A) can only be solved if its *cause* is eliminated, that is, if it is abstracted from the subjective cognitive performance that led to it. ‘However, this abstraction requires to indeterminately *negate* the term ‘determined’ in the expression ‘determined as indeterminate’ (this expression is the result of a cognitive performance). Being will then however be im-predicable ... every subjective performance on Being would then be negated – but this negation itself would still be a subjective performance.’⁸⁸ This problem leads to antinomy (B):

(B) **either** one tries to account for what Being is - but that leads to negating the attempt, i.e. to leave it be
or one consciously relinquishes this attempt; with the method of *not* thinking Being, one however applies the correct procedure to think Being.

We can see here how the category of *Negation* functions as the motor of the further development, but also of ‘determining’ Being in Nothingness in hindsight: we have already performed the cognitive act of *negating* both in order to be able to think them. ‘The cause of the antinomy’, Kesselring argues, ‘lies in the abstraction of thought from itself. This abstraction has the consequence that Being itself vanishes, so that it passes over to nothing (‘Nothingness’) ... but since every abstraction is a cognitive act (*Denkleistung*), in (B) we do not only deal with nothing at all, but with this particular cognitive act (of negation).’⁸⁹ Regarding that whatever we have hitherto tried to characterise as *Being* leads to *Nothingness*, its ‘opposite’, as its consequential form determination also indicates Being and nothingness as ‘the same’, in their ‘self-sameness’. Yet, they are also *different*, as the cognitive performance of negation makes clear from hindsight: without a separate semantic function of Nothingness from Being, we would not come to Dasein, nor to the category of Negation. Here, precisely, is the kernel of

87 Kesselring 1981, p. 572.
88 Kesselring 1981, p. 572.
89 Kesselring 1981, p. 572.

the antinomical structure inherent in the first determinations.

Wandschneider's assessment of the antinomical structure to be identified as the basic dialectical function in Hegel's method can be regarded as a 'fine-tuning' of Kesselring's pioneering work. Wandschneider assumes the principle of complementarity (Komplementaritätsprinzip). In it, Being, by virtue of its logical-semantic constitution, must be 'semantically equivalent' with 'not-Nothingness' ('nicht-Nichtsein'). Schematically, this is expressed in

$$(1) \quad = <\text{not-}N>.^{90}$$

The opposition expressed in this equation is 'constitutive for the meaning of Being'.⁹¹ The opposition could however also be expressed in terms of equivalence, then follows: $$ is not equivalent with $<N>$. The italicised 'is not' however shows that the concept $$ in its meaning of Being itself *presents a case of non-being*. It therefore has the quality which is equivalent to the meaning of the concept of $<N>$ which we have previously identified it as its opposite in (1). Because Being thus becomes 'an instance of $<N>$ ', we can say:

$$(2) \quad \text{ is } <N>\text{-equivalent}.^{92}$$

In this schema, for $$ however still, the meaning of Being must be conceded, expressed in the copula. The concept $$ therefore has the quality that corresponds to its meaning: Being. In this case, $$ is $$ -equivalent. But according to (1), $$ is not equivalent to $<N>$, so that

$$(3) \quad \text{ is not } <N>\text{-equivalent}.^{93}$$

By following (3) from (2), we set an automatism in motion, since on the side of $$ we again arrive at a case of non-being ('is not').⁹⁴

90 Wandschneider 1995, p. 104, where $$ stands for Being, $<N>$ for Nothingness and the brackets '<...>' stand for the *intensional* (not intentional) semantic content expressed in the concept, not for an entity or 'instance' that is its equivalent (e.g. the realm of things that exist).

91 Wandschneider 1995, p. 55.

92 '<S> ist <N>-entsprechend.' Wandschneider 1995, p. 56.

93 '<S> ist nicht <N>-entsprechend.' Ibid.

94 Hegel argues this point in the 1812 original edition more clearly than in the 1831 edition. In Remark 2 to the First Chapter, succeeding the category of Becoming, he again emphasises the necessarily nexus between Being and Nothingness by showing that Being 'is' Nothingness' and that 'this must be shown in its immediacy'. His first example is 'Being is the Absolute.' Here, according to Hegel, Being is predicated of something that it is not, 'that is differentiated from it.' Hegel 1966, p. 35. 'What is differentiated from it is something other than it; the other

A new predication must accordingly be attributed to $$ which would contradict the previous schema. Alternatingly contradictory predicates which result from their application to a concept by reflecting on the concept's semantic content, Wandschneider calls '*antinomical structures*' which must be based on an *antinomical concept*. The antinomical concept brings forth an antinomical structure by being 'the negative determination of equivalence with regard to itself' (*negative Entsprechungsbestimmung seiner selbst*).⁹⁵ From this negative determination of equivalence with regard to itself – or this *negative self-referentiality* – follows that every application of a structure of predication on this antinomical concept results in permanently alternating determinations of equivalence. The sequence of alternatingly contradictory determinations of equivalence is the main characteristic of the antinomical concept which Wandschneider find in Hegel's determinations of the beginning. Concretely, the antinomical concept on which the first movement is based is to be found in the schema

$$(4) \quad <N> = <\text{not-}<N>\text{-equivalent}>.$$

It is, however, important for Wandschneider that the passing from the level of *qualities* (' $<N>$ -equivalent', 'not $<N>$ -equivalent') to the level of *meaning* is considered in (4). By inferring that a relation of equivalence (*Entsprechungsverhältnis*) determines the quality of an entity (in the sense that ' $<\text{red}>$ -equivalent' determines the quality 'red'), we can now say that the concept $<\text{not-}<N>\text{-equivalent}>$ is equivalent to the concept of $<\text{not-}N>$. From this and (1) follows

$$(5) \quad = <N>.$$

This result is obviously contradictory to (1), even if (1) is indispensable for the semantic content of $$ and cannot be discarded. For the meaning of Being, needless to say, the demarcation against its negation, Nothingness or Non-Being⁹⁶, is constitutive. Wandschneider follows that both predications, (1) and (5), must be valid, even if they are mutually exclusive. The point Wandschneider emphasises is that they are *not* formally contradictory, because both predications adhere

however contains the Nothing of that by which it is its Other. What is therefore contained in this sentence is not pure Being, but simultaneously Being in relation to its Nothing. - The Absolute is hence differentiated from it; but by saying it *is* the Absolute, it is likewise said that they are not differentiated.' Hegel 1966, p. 36. In other words, what is expressed in a sentence of identity - the non-being of difference - simultaneously expresses precisely this very difference.

95 Wandschneider 1995, p. 37.

96 Nothingness and Non-Being are synonymous also in Hegel: 'If it is deemed more correct to oppose non-being to being, instead of nothing, there is no objection to this as regards the result, since in non-being there is contained the reference to being.' Hegel 2010, p. 60.

to *different levels of reflection*. This has nothing to do with not admitting the Law of the Excluded Middle: in tertium non datur, the contradiction precisely consists in relating to the same aspect at the same time for both sides of the contradiction. To say 'John is alive and John is not alive' is only a contradiction if we are talking about the same identical John at the same time.

Wandschneider therefore suggests to introduce the concept of the 'opposite equivalence of meaning' (*entgegengesetzte Bedeutungsäquivalenz*) to elucidate the nexus between the mutually exclusive and mutually presupposing elements that adhere to different levels of reflection:

(6) $(\langle B \rangle = \langle \text{not-}\langle N \rangle) \oplus (\langle B \rangle = \langle N \rangle)$

The symbol ' \oplus ' does not denote 'exclusive disjunction' in this case, but that both sides of the predication belong together to form a whole that is not a formal, but a dialectical contradiction: it was generated from the movement of thought itself, while simultaneously addressing two different levels of abstraction. Each side, taken in isolation, would evoke a formal contradiction, but not when viewed how one side *presupposes* the other. Herein consists the novelty of Wandschneider's formalisation: clarifying the character of the dialectical contradiction that sets Hegel's categorial development in motion. It disperses the mystery surrounding 'Hegel's dialectic' by providing a clear conceptual-logical understanding, eliminating the vagueness of notions that Hegel's method represented a movement 'from the simple to the complex'.

Needless to say, the above discussion delivers only a small detail of the overall argument Wandschneider delivers in his interpretation of Hegel's dialectical method, which for reason of space can only be presented in harsh limitation. Wandschneider for example elaborates on the aspect of the difference between the pragmatic-dialectical and the semantic-dialectical contradiction that has been mentioned before in connection with the 'pragmatic surplus of meaning' – this discussion however must remain excluded from the presentation here. For our purposes, it is solely useful to give a glimpse of the complexity that involves not only conceptual abstraction, but multi-faceted levels of *thought determining itself* by which Hegel introduces the beginning's dialectic. With this argumentative background in mind, we come to the conclusion that Arthur's claim that the 'forms' of value 'are in effect of such abstract purity as to constitute a real incarnation of the ideas of Hegel's logic' is difficult to defend, especially when the 'ideas of Hegel's logic' – or rather, the *idea* of Hegel's logic and the theory of dialectic that accompanies its unfolding – is only insufficiently grasped.

To sum up, the study on 'Marx's *Capital* and Hegel's *Logic*' remains

heavily selective as to which concepts of the *Logic* are applied to which theorems as presented in the chapters of Marx's main work: the categories of the *Logic*'s greater division into Being, Essence and Concept (in which Arthur omits Becoming, Finitude/Infinity, Being-for-Itself, The One and the Many, Repulsion and Attraction in the Chapter on Quality alone), are applied to Commodity Exchange, Money and Capital (Ch. 1 and 4, omitting Ch. 2 and 3 and parts of Ch. 1, such as, tellingly, Section 4 on the 'Fetishism of Commodities and its Secret'). It would be unproblematic to admit that not each and every single category of the Logic will show to be correspondent with those of Marx's work: but there would have to be 1) a defense of the decision to present particular categories while omitting others (which would in turn require a clear methodological reflection on one's own presentation), and 2) a clear concession or disclaimer that the exposition cannot be 100% strict. Instead, Arthur argues that Marx's Capital and Hegel's Logic 'are to be identified'.

But also in Arthur's own terms, the methodological decision as to which category should be elected to present the beginning of Marx's analysis, is unclear. We find varying concepts and varying justifications of these concepts to designate the first category of *Capital*. Arthur gives reasons for the 'commodity' as a starting point – 'To begin with we shall analyse the commodity-form itself'⁹⁷ – but he seems to be unable to decide whether it should not rather be, simply, the 'value form' which 'should be analysed first'⁹⁸ or the *exchange* of commodities: 'In other words ... the presentation starts with the mode of exchange.'⁹⁹

Let us finally turn to the third and last problem with Arthur's research programme and the way it is conducted emerges: the question of a possible analogy to Marx's Capital as a *Critique* of Political Economy in Hegel.

5. What's left of Marx's critical impetus if we say that value form analysis and Hegel's Logic are to be 'identified'?

In the discussion of 'Hegel's Theory of the Value form' (Chapter 9), Arthur convincingly demonstrates Hegel's trajectory from an objective value theory in the Jena system towards an 'idealist shift'¹⁰⁰ in his *Philosophy of Right* where value is solely determined by the will and needs of independent owners of use values who are 'informed by rational

97 Arthur 2004, p. 85.
98 Arthur 2004, p. 86.
99 Arthur 2004, p. 86.
100 Arthur 2004, p. 191.

considerations”¹⁰¹. In its mediation on a universal social scale in money, Arthur links his insight to the problem of value as socially necessary labour time which gets obfuscated by exchange conducted in such manner, and says that “[i]t is at the global level, where exchange is a systematic and regular social mediation, that socially necessary labour times (sic) impose themselves on exchange.”¹⁰² More specifically, Arthur sees Hegel’s theory of value as not guilty of the kind of commodity fetishism Marx criticised in the first chapter of *Capital*, namely that of seeing value as an *inherent* quality of the commodity. He rather sees Hegel guilty of ‘fetishising the commodity *form*’:

‘Hegel insists, no less strongly than Marx, that value is a form imposed on goods in the relations established by social activity. But for Marx this form is the object of criticism: commodity fetishism is a sign that the “process of production has mastery over man, instead of the opposite.” Yet Hegel interprets the same situation as one in which by imposing this social form on things “man exhibits his mastery over them”. In accordance with this principle Hegel advances the claim that it “is the thing’s *value* wherein its genuine substantiality becomes determinate and an object of consciousness.” In asserting that the thing has “genuine substantiality” for us only in value Hegel has thus ended by fetishising the commodity *form*.”¹⁰³

But it is a contradiction to say, on the one hand, that Hegel is *not* guilty of the reading Arthur offers of Marx’s criticism of commodity fetishism in Sec. 4, Ch. 1 – namely of ‘substantialising’ a value content to the commodity – and to claim in the next sentence that this is precisely what Hegel does – namely to assert that ‘the thing has “genuine substantiality” for us only in value’ and say that this view is merely a victim of the commodity *form*.

This odd style of argument aside: what do we gain from Arthur’s – in my view, correct – insight that Hegel’s assessment of the value form fundamentally lacks the critical impetus of Marx’s analysis that culminates in his conception of the fetish: can we still ‘identify’ both? Does Hegel not rather – as Arthur indicates – become himself a victim of the fetish that Marx’s describes, and for which ‘Man’s’ alleged ‘mastery’ over the production process is paradigmatic? To postpone the first question for a moment and preliminarily answer the second with a ‘yes’, let us turn to a more general overview of Hegel’s project, contrasting Marx. For Hegel, the concept *reveals* itself. At first, at the level of

101 Arthur 2004, p. 189.
102 Arthur 2004, p. 190.
103 Arthur 2004, p. 191.

appearance, it is superficially true, while with the further distinctions it becomes false, before it becomes finally true ‘again’, but now as the concrete totality of all the previous determinations which are sublated, in the triple meaning of the word.¹⁰⁴ For Marx, in stark contrast to Hegel, the concept however does *not* reveal itself. Understanding the operations of the capitalist system is not a question of the self-presentation of the concept at all. Quite to the contrary: what the concept and the concepts present (*darstellen*), has to be read *against themselves*, as the abyss between their appearance and their uncomprehended presuppositions, or their essence. For Marx, the truth of what *is* will not come to *appear*. This is his primary objection against Hegel’s idealism in which, if only we carefully recapitulate the concept’s dialectical journey, we will be rewarded with the appearance of Truth. But for Marx, the economic concepts exist because of their necessary falseness. To state this more precisely – while making things more complicated –, everything that exists in the conceptual form of social and economic convention, exists in a state of their mere appearance. The essence of these concepts is hidden, often in the ‘abode of production’. The (commodity) fetishism that is the central theme of Marx’s *Critique* of Political Economy expresses the criticism of the inverted truth in the categories’ appearance. Take the ‘value of labour’ as an example in which

‘the concept of value is not only completely extinguished, but inverted, so that it becomes its contrary. It is an expression as imaginary as the value of the earth. These imaginary expressions arise, nevertheless, from the relations of production themselves. They are categories for the forms of appearance of essential relations. That in their appearance things are often presented in an inverted way is something fairly familiar in every science, apart from political economy.’¹⁰⁵

By virtue of his system, Hegel positioned himself against the idea that the real and the ideal did and could not match – with the important condition that understanding/the intellect gave way to *dialectically* grasping the initial concepts’ falseness to open up to their truth in which, finally, the world and the concept we have of it would coincide. That would be the world of *reason*. To sum up, for Hegel, our task was to comprehend the logical, the natural, the scientific, the historical, the economic, the social and the psychological categories in their *final truth*, not – like Marx – in their *final falseness*. For Hegel therefore,

104 The triple meaning is less clear in English than in the German, where ‘aufheben’ denotes 1. to lift something up, 2. to keep something (in the sense of ‘aufbewahren’), 3. to abolish something. All three meanings are incorporated in the categorial development.
105 Marx 1976a, p. 677.

Kantian understanding could only give us a distorted and incomplete picture of the rightness of everything that exists. Hegel saw his ‘breakthrough to dialectic’ as the encompassing moment of such limited understanding of the world which would, finally, reveal the coincidence of Being and Thought. As a scientific approach, nothing could be further from Marx’s critical project. Indeed, Hegel’s affirmative world view that does not contradict pursuing a critical viewpoint of particular philosophical schools and their ‘reified world of metaphysic’¹⁰⁶ (Hume, Berkeley, German ‘critical philosophy’, Fichtean ‘intellectual intuition’) – especially towards the later years and the *Encyclopedia* – could not incorporate a concept as (commodity) fetishism, even if it wanted to. To simply identify Marx’s theory with Hegel’s *Logic* suggests to abandon Marx’s project of a ‘*ruthless criticism* of all that exists.’¹⁰⁷

This is not to deny that Hegel’s system lacks a critical function in toto. Quite to the contrary, as Michael Theunissen’s influential and seminal study on *Being and Seeming – The Critical Function of Hegel’s Logic (Sein und Schein - Die kritische Funktion der Hegelschen Logik)* has shown, Hegel’s method shares an important cognitive interest with Marx’s project, namely the *unity of presentation and criticism (die Einheit von Darstellung und Kritik)* which is particularly clear in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, but also in the *Logic*. Quoting from the *Phenomenology*: ‘The easiest task is to judge what has content (*Gehalt*) and solidity (*Gediegenheit*), more difficult is its comprehension, and the most difficult, that what unites both, is to generate its presentation’¹⁰⁸, according to Theunissen, the *Phenomenology* poses the methodological standard that

‘in the presentation, comprehension (*das Erfassen*) connects itself with judgment (*Beurteilung*), which is at all times criticism. Now Hegel also puts the *Science of Logic* to the same demands ... Simultaneously, he commits [the *Logic*] to the task of criticism which must be at one with that of presentation. Moreover, he is convinced that the unity of presentation and criticism which philosophy generally has to endeavour, will characterise logic not only as one, namely as the fundamental philosophical science, but as a *logic*, i.e. in its methodologically *specific* aspect.’¹⁰⁹

But Hegel’s critical enterprise is not only a matter of form or method. As Theunissen shows in great detail (which to reproduce here is impossible), the object of Hegel’s criticism, especially in the *Logic*

106 Theunissen 1980, p. 71.

107 Marx in his letter to Arnold Ruge, September 1843. Marx 1976b, p. 344.

108 Hegel 1986a, p. 11

109 Theunissen, p. 14.

of Being is ‘reifying thought’ (*vergegenständlichendes Denken*), more precisely an ontology which claims the existence of Being-in-itself: ‘The criticism of reifying thought is the specific calling of this part of the *Logic*.’¹¹⁰ What follows, more importantly, is Hegel’s construction of his *Logic* as a critique of ‘indifference’ (*Gleichgültigkeit*) and ‘domination’ (*Herrschaft*) as the overall theme and objects of criticism which, for Theunissen, in a certain extent also applies to Marx. As for Hegel, this is precisely because the being-logical (*seinslogische*) expression for the constitution of reified being (*Dasein*) is ‘indifference towards the other’.¹¹¹ The indifference is the sign of the first concepts’ own falsity, for as isolated categories, in separation from their reflexivity, their precise ‘in-difference’ (or ‘immediacy’ as we have seen in the self-sameness of Being and Nothingness), they must perish. As a critic of indifference however, Hegel also becomes a critic of domination. According to Theunissen, the *Logic of Essence* plays a significant role here: it reveals what reifying thought *actually does*. In its course, reification (*Vergegenständlichung*) becomes autonomisation (*Verselbständigung*)¹¹² which is produced by categories that fix all that exists only in relation to themselves. The autonomy (*Selbständigkeit*) of the categories in the *Logic of Essence* is what differentiates it from the *Logic of Being*, but even these categories (i.e. the ‘One’ and the ‘Other’) are as such only in their unity, together: ‘Obviously’, Theunissen argues, ‘this being-with-one another or togetherness is the opposite of indifference against the other.’¹¹³ In this state of opposition however, they are not indifferent, but relate to one another in a specific form that invites *domination of one over the other*: the autonomous being of the One (*das Eine*) which stands in opposition to the Other (*das Andere*) accordingly becomes the Whole (*das Ganze*) which encompasses the Other as its own moment: hence domination. From here, Theunissen follows that ‘[t]he identity of the oppositional concepts of autonomy however expresses more than just the ‘togetherness’ of indifference and domination. Domination not only presupposes indifferent existence (*gleichgültiges Bestehen*), but exponentiates it.’¹¹⁴ Since the relation of determinations of reflection to themselves is defined by having ‘the relation of its being different (*Anderssein*) in itself’, which is precisely the expression of its indifference in its relation to itself (isolation), it constantly re-inforces its own domination over the Other. Hence, domination and indifference

110 Theunissen 1981, p. 25.

111 Theunissen 1981, p. 25. To be differentiated from the essence-logical (wesenslogisch) determination of ‘indifference towards itself’.

112 Theunissen 1981, p. 28.

113 Theunissen 1981, p. 28.

114 Theunissen 1981, p. 30.

are intricately entwined, and with good reasons one may assume that they form an overarching topos of Hegel's critique.¹¹⁵

Note that here Hegel only argues strictly within the realm of the *Logic*. But Theunissen opens up the possibility that this interpretation lends itself to a more fundamentally epistemological one that could inform our perception of social totality:

*If [the Objective Logic] contains [a critique of real relations], then only in the sense that it is mediated directly through the criticism of thought-determinations. A critique of both real relations of indifference and real relations of domination must be mediated through the critical presentation of thought that presents relations as those of indifference and domination. The transformation of this latter kind of criticism into the former kind however can only take place through the identification of the appearance/seeming (Schein) of thought-determinations with that of their real appearance (reelle Erscheinung).*¹¹⁶

With the above discussion, I think we can see *how* Marx has taken on Hegel's method to develop a 'ruthless criticism of all that exists', and which Theunissen also sees potentially realised in Hegel. Theunissen's great insight that indifference and domination serve as the cornerstones of Hegel's criticism on the level of the *Logic* will, I think, easily prove themselves to be equally fundamental to Marx. It would take a more rigorous look at the incorporation of Hegel's method in Marx than performed by Arthur to see the homology of both in terms of serving a fundamental critique of capitalist self-understanding.

115 Reasons that obviously cannot become a part of the discussion here, but elaborated in Theunissen's book in great detail.

116 Theunissen (1981), p. 144.

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